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Chairperson: Mr. Saleh (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Lebanon)

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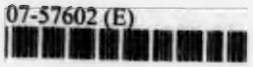


In the absence of Ms. Lintonen (Finland), Mr. Saleh (Lebanon), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 41: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (*continued*) (A/C.2/62/L.7)

Draft resolution on the permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

1. **Mr. Tag-Eldin** (Egypt), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/62/L.7, informed the Committee that Brunei Darussalam, Guinea, Namibia, Nicaragua and Senegal had joined the sponsors. The draft resolution was a reflection of the Secretary-General's report (A/62/75-E/2007/13), which demonstrated that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, continued to deepen the economic and social hardships of the Palestinian people. The majority of the paragraphs were similar to those of General Assembly resolution 61/184. However, some amended and updated language had been included and one new paragraph had been inserted: the sixteenth preambular paragraph, which expressed the need for respect and preservation of the territorial unity, contiguity and integrity of all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

Agenda item 52: Macroeconomic policy questions (*continued*)

(a) International trade and development (*continued*) (A/C.2/62/L.8 and L.10)

Draft resolution on unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries

2. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/62/L.8 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Draft resolution on international trade and development

3. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/62/L.10 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that a consensus on the draft resolution was extremely important in view of the current impasse in the Doha Round, which endangered the entire multilateral trading system.

(b) International financial system and development (*continued*) (A/C.2/62/L.9)

Draft resolution on the international financial system and development

4. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/62/L.9 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Agenda item 56: Globalization and interdependence (*continued*) (A/C.2/62/2)

(a) Globalization and interdependence (*continued*) (A/62/71-E/2007/46, A/62/216 and A/62/303)

(b) Science and technology for development (*continued*) (A/62/136; A/C.2/62/L.11)

(c) Preventing and combating corrupt practices and transfer of assets of illicit origin and returning such assets, in particular to the countries of origin, consistent with the United Nations Convention against Corruption (*continued*) (A/62/85 and A/62/116; CAC/COSP/2006/12)

Draft resolution on the International Year of Astronomy, 2009

5. **Mr. Mantovani** (Italy) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/62/L.11. Astronomy was one of the oldest sciences and had deep roots in virtually every culture. Astronomical research and education promoted international cooperation and contributed fundamentally to the evolution of other sciences and applications in a wide range of fields. The declaration of 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy had been supported by resolution 33 C/25, adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in October 2005 with a view to highlighting the importance of astronomical sciences and their contribution to knowledge and development. Such a declaration could also play a crucial role in raising public awareness of the importance of astronomy for sustainable development and providing access to astronomical research and education, particularly in developing countries.

6. **Ms. Gomes** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, said that the international community had long recognized that the outcomes of globalization were unevenly distributed. Far greater attention must be given to the social dimensions of globalization and to the equitable access opportunities it provided to tackle poverty and to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The European Union would continue to work to ensure that globalization was a positive force for all. In that regard, special attention should be given to the least developed countries and to African countries, which needed to increase their exports, attract more foreign direct investment and build solid institutions responsive to the needs of their people.

7. Countries should integrate trade policies into their national development strategies and plans. The European Union strongly believed in open markets, progressive trade liberalization and stronger multilateral rules. It therefore remained fully committed to the Doha Development Agenda and would continue to work with the World Trade Organization (WTO) for a successful, balanced and comprehensive outcome to the Doha Round.

8. The European Union strongly supported the widely accepted principle that good governance and sound institutions were prerequisites for sustainable development and poverty eradication. The social and environmental policies outlined in the report of the Secretary-General on the impact of international commitments, policies and processes on the scope and implementation of national development strategies (A/62/303, para. 33) would help to prevent the marginalization of various groups, particularly women. In line with the report, the European Union believed that each country must take primary responsibility for its own development and that the role of national policies and development strategies could not be overemphasized. Domestic resource mobilization was therefore an issue of the utmost importance, particularly because it was not in the long-term interest of any country to rely excessively on foreign capital.

9. Revenues from natural resources could be a substantial source of finance for development, provided there was sufficient transparency in the management of such revenues. The international community should therefore examine ways to increase the quality and transparency of contracts and financial flows related to natural resources and should work towards the development of global codes of conduct and standards for transparency. Governments should contribute to the establishment of an enabling environment for business, not only to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) but also to increase local private sector investment. In that context, public investment in basic infrastructure and the development of human capital and institutional capacity were all relevant for sustained economic growth. Public-private sector partnerships should also be encouraged.

10. The new challenges posed by the negative effects of climate change were already affecting the poorest and most vulnerable groups in a disproportionate manner. The international community must therefore work towards the objective of combining efforts to combat climate change with development efforts.

11. The European Union welcomed the suggestion in the report that national Governments should involve all stakeholders in policymaking processes, including civil society and the private sector. National development could also be fostered by regional integration and cooperation, including by strengthening regional trade agreements. New opportunities must be pursued to open markets and to tackle trade distortions comprehensively, both within the multilateral system and through bilateral and regional initiatives.

12. Given the untapped potential for closer regional cooperation, the European Union was currently negotiating economic partnership agreements with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries with a view to establishing regional markets. The forthcoming European Union-Africa summit to be held in Lisbon would further reinforce the European Union's commitment to establishing a new platform for international cooperation based on four interrelated pillars: development, good governance and human rights, peace and stability, and regional trade and integration.

13. The European Union continued to support the reforms under way at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to increase the voice and

participation of developing countries in global governance and global rule setting.

14. The European Union recognized the need for donors to align their overall support to recipient countries' national development strategies, institutions and procedures and reiterated its commitment to the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. In that regard, in 2005 European Union member States had adopted a timetable for achieving the 0.7 per cent target of gross national income (GNI) as official development assistance (ODA) by 2015, and had set an intermediate target of 0.56 per cent by 2010. The European Union had collectively surpassed the 2006 ODA target of 0.39 per cent of GNI and was currently providing 57 per cent of global ODA.

15. The increasingly relevant role that some developing countries played in shaping the world economy and the emergence of new donors from within developing countries should be encouraged within a framework that ensured the quality and effectiveness of aid and provided for adequate coordination and division of labour among donors. Such a framework should be based on the rules and best practices developed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Union and the international financing institutions.

16. Some States members of the European Union were playing a leading role in voluntary initiatives aimed at mobilizing predictable and stable sources of financing, such as the International Facility for Immunization and the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID). With regard to the role of the United Nations system, the proposals relating to policy implication packages that analysed the impact of international agreements on national economies would require further discussion.

17. Welcoming the report by the Secretary-General on science and technology for development (A/62/136), she said that the European Union considered the projects and initiatives conducted by the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to be highly relevant and that it attached particular importance to the Network of Centres of Excellence; the science, technology and innovation policy reviews; and the inter-agency cooperation network on technology (UN-Biotech). It also highly valued activities that helped to bridge the digital divide and assisted developing countries, particularly in Africa, with the establishment of research and development initiatives and the promotion of technology and know-how. The European Union also commended any approach that helped to raise awareness about the relevance of integrating science, technology and innovation policies into national development strategies.

18. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General on preventing and combating corrupt practices (A/62/116), she said that corruption, a major obstacle to sustainable development and democratic governance, must be addressed through an integrated strategy at the international level. The European Union had taken important steps in that regard by implementing the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions in 1999 and by strengthening the anti-bribery legislation and systems of European Union member States.

19. In that connection, the United Nations Convention against Corruption should be implemented as soon as possible. Chapter V of the Convention, in particular, would play an important role in preventing and combating corrupt practices. The European Union endorsed the work being undertaken by the United Nations in that regard but underscored the importance of pursing common principles and taking joint action. For that reason, in March 2007 the European Union had adopted a common position for the establishment of asset recovery bureaux, which would help to trace and identify assets of illicit origin.

20. The European Union was also negotiating a common position with regard to the two working groups of the United Nations Convention against Corruption dealing with the review mechanism and technical assistance. A meaningful review mechanism and constructive dialogue on technical assistance would play a key role in the operationalization of the Convention. In that regard, the European Union stressed the importance of all modalities for judicial cooperation on the recovery of assets and of instruments used for gathering data, such as the UNODC checklist recently used to identify technical assistance needs. The European Union welcomed the opportunity to further discuss those issues during the second session of the Conference of the States Parties

to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, to be held in Bali in 2008.

21. **Mr. Daniel** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), welcomed the call by the Secretary-General in his report (A/62/303) for the implementation of national development strategies which balanced international obligations with national priorities. However, the ability of CARICOM to implement goal-oriented national development strategies was being impeded by the negative impact of globalization. While globalization had created opportunities for some countries, the small island developing States of CARICOM had suffered the most from globalization and remained marginalized in the rapidly globalized world economy. Managing globalization for the benefit of all was therefore a major concern for CARICOM.

22. Global economic liberalizing forces were making it increasingly difficult for CARICOM countries to shape their own national policies and to control their own economies, particularly since existing mechanisms for the governance of globalization were enforced selectively by the rich and powerful when it suited their interests. In that respect, the World Bank should abandon its attempts to micromanage the economies of the Caribbean Community through conditionalities and focus its efforts on development activities in the region. WTO should also take into account the fact that countries had different levels of income and development and emphasize poverty eradication and job creation as much as trade expansion and liberalization. However, recent WTO rulings had adversely affected the banana-, rice- and sugar-producing countries of CARICOM. Such examples of globalization, particularly the continued use of iniquitous agricultural subsidies by developed countries, would not bring CARICOM farmers any closer to the development assistance that they had been promised and so desperately needed.

23. While globalization facilitated labour mobility across national borders, conflicts arose when developed countries attempted to restrict such movement. The national development strategies of CARICOM were also threatened by the brain drain from the region. CARICOM welcomed the holding of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in September 2006, which had reinforced the important nexus between those two issues. It strongly believed that the benefits of migration could be enhanced through cooperation between countries of origin and destination. Since international migration was a fact of life, CARICOM suggested that the equivalent of the most-favoured-nation principle could provide a basic foundation to create a mutually beneficial environment for migrants and their countries of origin and destination.

24. CARICOM acknowledged the complexities of globalization and called on the international community to provide it with the human, financial and technical resources it would need to reduce poverty, improve its economic performance and care for its environment, as well as additional assistance to combat the effects of climate change. The international community should also undertake efforts to reform the existing multilateral trading architecture in order to increase its credibility, legitimacy and effectiveness.

25. **Mr. Chidyausiku** (Zimbabwe), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that for globalization to work, an all-inclusive and equitable global agenda must be pursued. Developed countries should fully implement all their commitments to developing countries. The external debt crisis should be addressed in a way that allowed developing countries to pursue sustainable development and meet the internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

26. He stressed the need for the satisfactory conclusion of the Doha Round of trade negotiations. The SADC subregion would be able to achieve sustainable development if it received the right level of foreign direct investment. It could record a higher growth rate if it received a fair price for its commodities. Developing countries should be given special and differential treatment, taking into account their adjustment challenges while assisting them with capacity-building to prepare them for global integration. It was also important to operationalize the Aid for Trade Initiative to assist developing countries in addressing supply-side constraints and building capacity.

27. The SADC countries had embarked on an accelerated integration process with a view to addressing constraints relating to market size, lack of outlets to the sea, inadequacy of infrastructure, and lack of adequate transit and trade-facilitation facilities

in member States. The leaders of SADC planned to establish a free trade area in 2008.

28. The continuing digital divide between developed and developing countries undermined efforts to achieve equitable integration of developing countries into the global economy. The Southern African Development Community recognized the efforts of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and UNCTAD to assist developing countries with policy reviews in science, technology and innovation. The United Nations system should continue coordinating and initiating programmes to help developing countries promote science and technology for development. Developed countries should provide assistance to bridge the technological gap by promoting technology transfer that encouraged diffusion of technology through research and development and science education. The intellectual property rights regime should be reviewed to enable developing countries to have access to relevant knowledge and technology. Intellectual property rights regimes should not hinder the availability of lifesaving medicines at affordable prices or the right of developing countries to have their traditional knowledge protected. It was worrying that the information and communications technologies (ICT) gap within and between countries was widening. The forces of globalization should be harnessed in such a way as to allow rural communities to have access to and benefit from ICT.

29. **Ms. Jahan** (Bangladesh) said that her Government had taken strong reform measures against corruption. It now had an adequately empowered anti-corruption commission with resources and personnel at its disposal to effectively tackle the problem of corruption. Anti-money-laundering efforts were being strengthened in consultation with relevant international agencies and with the country's development partners. Bangladesh had acceded to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Nevertheless, further capacity-building of relevant institutions, such as the anti-corruption commission and the Central Bank, was needed. The Government had taken measures to bring back assets that had been illegally transferred abroad, but much remained to be done. The process of repatriating siphoned-off money entailed huge legal complexities which often rendered asset-recovery efforts costly and hazardous. The Government had recently formed a task force to head recovery efforts.

30. National efforts would not succeed without the cooperation and support of the destination country and other stakeholders. Special efforts were needed to overcome legal obstacles between requesting and requested States. Her delegation called upon the international community to lend its full support to Bangladesh in its efforts to recover ill-gotten proceeds of corruption that remained abroad, as the release of those resources would greatly contribute to the country's national development efforts. Despite the entry into force of the Convention against Corruption, no concrete results could be seen. A global partnership was needed to combat the transfer of proceeds of corruption abroad and to facilitate repatriating those assets to their countries of origin.

31. **Mr. Soetarto** (Indonesia) said that greater efforts must be made to strengthen existing mechanisms to support research and development initiatives and to facilitate access to environmentally sound technologies for developing countries. Capacity-building assistance from the developed countries and the international community should be promoted so that developing countries could implement sustainable national strategies for human resources and science and technology.

32. Indonesia was committed to rooting out corruption from the bodies responsible for the nation's economic and political affairs. Legal disincentives were currently utilized to good effect in combating corruption. Indonesia's willingness to host the second session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption was another indicator of its commitment. In preparation for that event, the Corruption Eradication Commission of Indonesia had held a regional seminar on making international anti-bribery standards operational in September 2007. Every effort must be made to implement all the provisions of the Convention against Corruption. Increased cooperation between States and their various legal systems must be maintained.

33. International migration and development, although not discussed in the current session of the General Assembly, should continue to be considered. The High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development held in 2007 had played an important role in encouraging key players to discuss pragmatic options for dealing with the issue. Indonesia applauded the effort of the Government of Belgium in convening the first meeting of the Global Forum on Migration in

the summer of 2007 in Brussels, and stood ready to support the Government of the Philippines in convening the next forum in late 2008. The Global Migration Group should continue to play an active role in keeping Member States apprised of the status of follow-up to the High-level Dialogue.

34. **Mr. Kononuchenko** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation attached great importance to consideration by the General Assembly of the issues of globalization and interdependence. In order to protect the most vulnerable countries from being marginalized and to strike an appropriate balance between international obligations and national priorities, all aspects of globalization must be fair. His Government had consistently called for the effective management of globalization to neutralize its negative effects and to enhance its positive aspects with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As the most universal and representative international organization, the United Nations must play the central coordinating role in such activities.

35. The prevention and eradication of corruption, money-laundering and illicit transfers of funds abroad were equally important in the context of globalization. A priority area for international cooperation in that field should be the recovery of assets obtained illegally and transferred abroad. The transborder nature of corruption made it necessary to expand and strengthen international cooperation in combating it. The Russian Federation's willingness to participate in such efforts had been demonstrated by its ratification in 2006 of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the Council of Europe Criminal Law Convention on Corruption.

36. In accordance with such fundamental international instruments, the Russian Federation would shortly develop and implement an effective and coordinated anti-corruption policy that promoted the participation of society in monitoring the enforcement of anti-corruption legislation as well as the adoption of effective measures to criminalize corruption in national legislation. The Russian Federation was also taking measures to strengthen and consolidate its national anti-corruption legislation, including the adoption in 2001 of a federal law on preventing the legalization (laundering) of funds obtained by criminal means; a Presidential Decree in 2002 which had approved general principles for the conduct of civil servants; and a comprehensive law on combating corruption, drawn up by the State Duma, was currently being negotiated. Mr. Viktor Zubkov, the recently appointed Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, had also emphasized that combating corruption was one of his Government's main priorities.

37. **Mr. Quezada** (Chile) commended the joint initiatives by the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to follow up the Tunis Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society Connect Africa — a project that provided ICT training to engineers and technicians from developing countries — was an outstanding example of that synergy.

38. International efforts to bridge the digital divide between countries and regions must be intensified in order to enable countries to reap the benefits of new information and communications technologies. Chile was implementing a national ICT agenda which included a national computer literacy campaign aimed at enabling all sectors of society to have access to computers, as well as to education and training in computer technology. It was also promoting e-government and developing an appropriate legal framework.

39. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that every effort must be made to ensure that globalization helped reduce the existing asymmetries in international trade, intellectual property regimes and investment flows. In the debate on globalization, greater emphasis should be placed on the protection of juridical rights recognized by international legislation and, in particular, on the fight against organized crime and corruption. Trafficking in persons, drug trafficking, smuggling of chemical precursors, money-laundering and arms trafficking, among other crimes, should be considered from the standpoint of their impact on development. The principle of shared responsibility should be applied, paying special attention to strengthening prevention efforts, international cooperation and technical assistance. Colombia was committed to implementing the United Nations Convention against Corruption and promoting international measures for the recovery and repatriation of illegally transferred funds.

40. Progress in science and technology was essential to guaranteeing the sustainability of development and economic growth. It was important to take advantage of the multilateral setting offered by the Organization

for the discussion of science and technology for development and to maintain its intergovernmental nature. Priority should be given to follow-up and implementation of the commitments agreed at the World Summit on the Information Society.

41. **Mr. Gass** (Switzerland) said that Switzerland had made available to States parties to the Convention against Corruption its expertise in asset recovery and had contributed to the implementation of key provisions of chapter V, inter alia by chairing the Vienna working group on the elaboration of article 57 on asset recovery. The Swiss Government had organized three informal seminars on the recovery of assets of politically exposed persons. Switzerland was providing financial support for the International Center for Asset Recovery based in Basel, which worked closely with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). It had pledged to contribute actively to the Stolen Asset Recovery initiative launched by the World Bank and UNODC. Asset-recovery efforts should be continued, and more resources should be invested in addressing other aspects of the problem, including prevention, identification and prosecution of acts of corruption and promoting the exchange of information and good practices in the area of prevention. The resolution to be adopted by the General Assembly at the current session should clearly mention the need to extend the work on implementation of the Convention to chapters II and III.

42. **Mr. Yao** Wenlong (China) concurred with the Secretary-General's statement, in the report contained in document A/62/303, that globalization should be managed for the benefit of all. Countries were obliged to make the trade-off between formulating national development strategies and submitting to the rules and regimes that increasingly governed international economic relations. Those regimes should take into account the disadvantages faced by developing countries and thus allow them to integrate into the world economy.

43. Three points were paramount in that regard: firstly, developing countries must participate fully and equally in economic decision-making. That could be achieved by reforming the international financial system, establishing an open and just trading system and giving those countries a greater voice in international economic institutions. The United Nations should continue to play a leading role in fostering international cooperation for development.

44. Secondly, developing countries should be granted the leeway to strike a balance between national policies and international commitments. The special situations of those countries should be taken into account when formulating multilateral rules, thereby allowing them to determine their development strategies on the basis of national priorities.

45. Finally, the capacity of developing countries to integrate into the world economy must be enhanced. Universal prosperity could not be achieved when there was an ever-widening gap between the North and the South. The international community, and the developed countries in particular, should fulfil the commitments made at United Nations conferences and summits by increasing ODA and debt relief, opening markets and effecting technology transfers.

46. China had developed remarkably over the previous three decades by combining national development and economic globalization. While it was still a developing country itself, it had been making efforts to assist other developing countries, including in Africa, to enhance their capacity for independent development.

47. Turning to the concept of using science and technology for development, he agreed wholeheartedly that they could help eliminate poverty, improve people's health and attain the Millennium Development Goals. UNCTAD had done commendable work over the years in that connection. His delegation called for strengthened practical measures to improve the training of scientific and technical personnel in developing countries.

48. On the issue of combating corrupt practices and returning assets to their country of origin, the number of States that had signed the United Nations Convention on Corruption demonstrated that there was strong political will to act. Even stronger international collaboration was needed to prevent criminals from using the laws of their countries of residence to escape extradition. Furthermore, a proactive and pragmatic approach should be taken to identifying, tracing and returning assets derived from corruption, so that discrepancies between legal systems could not be used to prevent their repatriation.

49. **Ms. Juul** (Norway) said that the United Nations Convention against Corruption had been a major achievement. Progress must continue on implementation review, asset recovery and technical assistance. A mechanism must be developed to assist countries in implementing the Convention. Such a mechanism would in turn ensure that the provisions on asset recovery functioned as intended, which was of key importance to developing countries. Decisions taken at the first session of the Conference of the States Parties had set in motion several important initiatives. Her delegation called on all parties to make the upcoming second session of the Conference of the States Parties equally productive, particularly by taking further steps to ensure the full implementation of the Convention.

50. She commended the United Nations and the World Bank on their Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative, which would address the problem of financial structures in developed countries that facilitated corruption by laundering and hiding stolen assets.

51. Unfortunately, the issue of illicit financial flows from developing countries was being overlooked in the debate on financing for development. Those flows, which included the proceeds of both corruption and criminal activities such as the drug trade, human trafficking and tax evasion, were estimated to total over $1 trillion annually, half of which came from developing countries. That was a huge sum, compared to the $150 billion that was needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It was necessary to gain a better understanding of the impact of the drain of resources from developing countries. Questions about who received those assets, what mechanisms facilitated the flows of illicit funds and whether the right policies and tools were in place to stop them must be examined. Norway wished to place those issues higher on the agenda of the conference for the review of financing for development to be held in Doha in 2008.

52. **Ms.** Aye Aye **Soe** (Myanmar) acknowledged the contributions by UNCTAD, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and UN-Biotech in assisting developing countries to integrate science and technology into their national development plans. She noted that UNCTAD was currently unable to meet all the demands for assistance, and urged development partners to significantly enhance their assistance to developing countries.

53. Her Government recognized that science and technology played a pivotal role in promoting sustainable development. In 1996, it had established the Ministry of Science and Technology to undertake research and development in agriculture, forestry, rural development, industries, health and education. To promote human resource development, the Ministry had established 68 universities and technical colleges throughout the country.

54. While science and technology could help countries achieve sustainable development, the challenge was to make the transfer of technology and know-how affordable for them. Developing countries would require substantial support from developed countries and international agencies to ensure that they benefited from advances in science and technology.

55. **Ms. Rovirosa** (Mexico) said that the rapid rise in the number of States acceding to the United Nations Convention against Corruption — which had been opened for signature in Mérida, Mexico, in 2003 — was evidence of a serious commitment to combating corruption. She called on all States that had not yet done so to sign the Convention so that it would become universally applicable. The Convention should continue to be given a high profile because it afforded new opportunities for innovative provisions, particularly with respect to asset recovery. Mexico had participated in the work of the three working groups at the first session of the Conference of the States Parties and fully endorsed the Secretary-General's conclusions that the ambitious workplan and mandate of the Convention should be supported, that asset recovery should be pursued openly and collaboratively (although complex technical cases should not be influenced by politics) and that efforts should be made to ensure the full implementation of the Convention (A/62/116, paras. 33 to 35).

56. **Mr. Loh** Seng Kok (Malaysia) said that globalization must be better managed to ensure that its benefits were evenly shared. Changing the rules of the market mid-game, something that often occurred at the behest of the powerful to suit their interests, was a form of protectionism, and was especially reprehensible when, as the Secretary-General had noted in his report, developing countries were becoming increasingly dependent on export markets (A/62/303, para. 46).

57. Future economic growth would be characterized by financial speculation as a source of individual wealth; further escalation in the price of oil; and higher costs related to climate change, which would be increasingly borne by the poor. Three changes to the current international economic system would lead to a more humane form of globalization. Firstly, the power imbalance between the rich and the poor must be corrected. Interdependence was still seen as a zero-sum game, in which one side won only at the expense of the other, rather than as an inter-reliance among all people in which the human chain was only as strong as its weakest link.

58. Secondly, there must be recognition that equal treatment was not synonymous with fair treatment. The principle of the level playing field assumed that all countries were at the same stage of development, which was not the case. Instead, the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries should apply.

59. Thirdly, the international economic structure must be recast in such a way that it amplified, rather than diminished, the strengths of the poor. The current intellectual property regime was an apt illustration of that point: owing to biopiracy and bioprospecting, developing countries were unable to tap into the potential wealth represented by the vast biodiversity and bioresources they possessed. Furthermore, the regime in place created obstacles to the transfer of technology and access to life-saving medicines.

60. To reap the fullest benefits of globalization, rules and norms should be established only with the participation of the large part of the world that was currently excluded from such decision-making. The principles of justice, equity and inclusion must be the cornerstones of a new, more humane international order.

61. **Mr. Jallow** (Gambia) said that the ongoing marginalization of developing countries was due not to globalization itself, but rather to the way in which it was managed. In order to tackle global imbalances and make globalization work for everyone, international cooperation and the global partnership for development must be strengthened. Developing countries had a right to, and bore primary responsibility for, development. They must be given the space to pursue policies and strategies reflecting country-specific environments. Developed countries must meet their commitments on trade, investment and industrial development and development partners should scale up their assistance, in accordance with the 2005 World Summit Outcome. The advanced countries had set the rules of the game in order to shape globalization to further their own interests. It was high time that the global trading system and the international financial architecture were reformed.

62. Science and technology played a critical role in poverty alleviation and sustainable development. The development and adoption of technologies that reflected the needs and specific circumstances of developing countries should be encouraged. The linkage between development and the environment was essential to ensuring sustainable development. The key to sustainable development therefore lay in the recognition of the interdependence of growth, poverty alleviation, science and technology, and sustainable environmental management. In that connection, he welcomed the efforts of UNCTAD, other relevant organizations and development partners aimed at helping developing countries integrate policies relating to science, technology and innovation into their national development plans and strategies.

63. His Government was committed to preventing and combating corrupt practices. The impact of corruption on development and economic growth was such that the world could not afford merely to pay lip service to its eradication. He urged all States parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption to implement the outcome of the first session of the Conference of the States Parties to that Convention, held in December 2006 in Amman, particularly the initiatives relating to the recovery, transfer and return of assets of illicit origin and the call for technical support and capacity-building in that regard.

64. **Mr. Metelitsa** (Belarus) said that the United Nations should play a leading role in establishing a just international economic order. For globalization to bear fruit, economic information must flow freely, illicit trade must be constrained, and States must rein in excessive arms spending.

65. His Government was taking measures to broaden the use of science and technology in order to achieve sustainable development. UNCTAD and other United Nations entities should increase their assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to help them to adopt new technologies,

particularly information, communications and energy-efficiency technologies. New mechanisms should be established to transfer such technologies to those countries on advantageous terms, while also protecting the rights of intellectual property owners.

66. **Mr. Salim** (India) said that the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/303) highlighted the difficulties faced by developing countries in pursuing national development strategies and reinforced the argument that globalization, while providing tremendous opportunities for progress and prosperity, also presented significant challenges and constraints for developing countries. Indeed, the benefits of globalization were unevenly shared, while its costs were unevenly distributed. He welcomed the report's recognition of the negative impact of capital flows on exchange rate stability, inflation rates and liquidity, and on developing countries' ability to implement counter-cyclical measures (A/62/303, paras. 24 and 25).

67. The traditional macroeconomic policy prescriptions of the Bretton Woods institutions eroded developing countries' policy space and forced them to adopt policies that gave inadequate attention to public investment and social sector development. Problems relating to liquidity in the financial markets of developed countries were tackled with short-term measures to inject liquidity, while similar problems in developing countries were diagnosed as "structural problems". The agricultural policies of developing countries were severely affected by the huge subsidies in developed countries, while the steady reduction in their industrial tariffs had greatly enhanced the risks of the de-industrialization of developing countries. Developing countries also faced unfavourable market access regimes and non-trade barriers. Furthermore, critical technologies in the areas of public health and climate change remained inaccessible and unaffordable for developing countries owing to the intellectual property rights regime. Most importantly, developing countries had no say in shaping the international financial, economic, trade and technological regimes, even though they were the ones most impacted by them.

68. The trade-off between the benefits of accepting international disciplines and rules and the consequent loss of policy space represented a difficult decision for developing countries, many of which lacked the capacity to evaluate all the options and analyse the impact of international rules. The international community must consider the issue of national policy space and international disciplines and commitments as a whole, both when implementing and interpreting existing disciplines and commitments and when deciding on future ones. International regimes must be more flexible, so as to give developing countries the policy space to determine their own development strategies. In order for the benefits of globalization to be shared more evenly, international economic and financial architecture of the time-bound reform was necessary. The process should be overseen by the United Nations.

69. Usually, there was a direct relationship between a country's scientific and technological base and its level of development. Indeed, it was the level of access to and utilization of technology that differentiated developed from developing countries. Developing countries should emphasize access to and acquisition of knowledge in order to boost their development paths. His Government recognized the importance of science and technology in the development process and was actively building capacity with a view to becoming not only a knowledge-producing society, but also a knowledge-sharing and knowledge-consuming society. In addition, developing countries must effectively utilize traditional knowledge and biogenetic resources, and international technology regimes must fully integrate the development dimension. He called for pragmatic ways of promoting collaborative research and development by developed and developing countries. Lastly, he reiterated the importance of the World Summit on the Information Society and its follow-up process and welcomed the enhanced mandate of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development.

70. **Mr. Al Bayati** (Iraq) said that information and communication technology (ICT) was important not only as a prerequisite for sustainable development but as an economic sector in itself. It opened up new solutions to age-old problems such as poverty, resource enhancement and social justice, and created new opportunities for strengthening democracy, transparency and accountability. The United Nations had played a role in helping developing and less developed nations close the technology gap through various international conferences, as well as through the Secretary-General's 2006 Global Alliance for ICT and Development initiative which had the potential to function as a global forum for dialogue and partnership

with a view to using ICT to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Science and technology should not be the monopoly of the few, but should be available for all individuals and societies to use in the service of sustainable development. Developing countries needed to employ ICT strategies to create information economies that encouraged the development of electronic commerce and electronic Government services, based on open source software to reduce costs.

71. In the past few years, his country had introduced a Ministry of Science and Technology, established mobile phone networks and connected several of its ministries to the Internet. Despite the obstacles it faced, his Government, with assistance from the international community, was investing in ICT infrastructure, establishing research and development centres to bring together scientists and inventors, incorporating ICT into its school curricula with a view to eradicating technological illiteracy, and building an ICT database in accordance with international standards.

72. **Ms. Aitimova** (Kazakhstan) said that, if poorly managed, globalization would deepen inequalities between countries and benefit only a few. If properly managed, however, it could lead to sustained global economic growth and international financial stability. Enhancing the capacity of countries with economies in transition to respond to the challenges of globalization, ensuring favourable market access for their exports and securing foreign direct investment were essential for their development and integration into the world economy. To that end, the international financial, monetary and trading systems must be reformed and developing country participation in global decision-making and norm-setting must be increased.

73. Science and technology, along with education, were key to enhancing national competitiveness and achieving sustained economic growth. Hence the importance of strengthening international cooperation in the field of science and technology for development. Developing country access to environmentally sound and economically viable technology must be facilitated. Technical assistance from specialized international organizations was particularly important for technology transfer. Kazakhstan's main aim in developing a national innovative system was to ensure sustainable economic growth, promote the development of hi-tech enterprises and mitigate environmental and social problems through the use of new technologies. It had taken concrete steps to create an innovative economy, including adopting a programme on the development of a national innovative system for the period 2005-2015. She also mentioned the creation of three regional technology parks in Kazakhstan and the planned establishment of international scientific centres in various spheres; Kazakhstan's participation in a number of international space projects; the adoption of a State programme for the development of space activities in Kazakhstan; the successful launch, in 2006, of Kazakhstan's first national geostationary communications and rebroadcasting satellite and the planned launch, in the near future, of its second satellite; and Kazakhstan's involvement, together with its partners in the region, in the project to build the "Baiterek" space rocket complex.

74. Corruption was a key element in economic underperformance and a major obstacle to development. Good governance and national apparatuses based on integrity, transparency and accountability were essential to sustainable development and economic growth. Her Government had made combating corruption a priority and was working to prevent corruption in all its forms. She mentioned, in particular, the adoption of anti-corruption legislation and legislation on the civil service; the adoption of a State programme to combat corruption for the period 2006-2010; the implementation of measures to abolish administrative barriers and introduce e-Government; the creation of one-stop public service centres; the development of a code of ethics for civil servants accompanied by salary increases; wide-ranging judicial reform, including the introduction of juries; the creation, in 2007, of a financial intelligence unit; and Kazakhstan's accession, in 2003, to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

75. **Mr. Alahraf** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that while some saw globalization as a way of disseminating the benefits of economic freedom around the world, others saw it as a way of making the rich richer and the poor poorer. While globalization provided genuine opportunities to developing countries, its benefits were uneven due to imbalances in the global system. Fairer international financial and commercial principles should be established to guard against price fluctuations, so that developing countries

did not need to maintain such high levels of foreign currency reserves and could instead invest in production. The efforts of developing countries to restructure their economies and diversify away from commodities towards manufacturing and services should be supported. It should be recognized that privatization and the free market alone would not produce development, and that conditional assistance made it difficult for developing countries to balance international commitments with national priorities. Developed countries needed to increase assistance, and the flow of funds from the developing countries to the developed countries should be adjusted. Care should also be taken, as more and more States became party to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, not to politicize that issue.

76. The developed countries also needed to help developing countries overcome the digital divide. The Commission on Science and Technology for Development should be enhanced, and the outcomes of the 2005 World Summit on the Information Society and the 2006 ICT for All Forum, both held in Tunis, should be followed up. More funding was needed to help African policymakers with their plans to create information societies. In that connection, he welcomed the Connect Africa project undertaken jointly by UNCTAD and the Centre des Technologies de l'Information in Geneva to translate the ICT policies of developing countries into action. His country had also recently signed an agreement with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on a $72 million National ICT Project for Capacity Building that would construct a national network to connect Libyan university campuses.

77. **Mr. Reyes** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that globalization was at the heart of the problems facing the international community. For several years, the world's population had been expressing its unhappiness at globalization's devastating impact on the planet. For every international summit, there had been a parallel summit aimed at drawing the attention of world leaders to the consequences of neoliberal globalization.

78. One of the myths surrounding the globalization debate was the supposed interdependence in today's world. In reality, the relationships of dependency inherited from colonial times had allowed the West to dominate, to the detriment of developing countries. In such a context, the concepts of interdependence and integration lacked credibility for the overwhelming majority of the world's population. Interdependence became empty rhetoric when one observed the lack of political will among developed countries to promote development goals. At the same time, an increasing number of conditions and restrictions were placed on developing countries. The global mechanisms of domination and control — including some entities of the international financing system — tried to make it seem that globalization occurred independently of the public and private relationships of world power.

79. Neoliberal globalization had exacerbated poverty and exclusion, and placed multinational economic power at the heart of international production. At the same time, the globalizing forces' unlimited production and consumption undermined environmental sustainability and jeopardized the ability of natural resources to recover. The tendency to homogenize and standardize had gradually eliminated cultural wealth and diversity. The emergence of international economic regimes must not impinge on the policy space of States. The latter must be able to implement their national development strategies in order to attain the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

80. In recent years, the United Nations had bowed to pressure from a number of Member States to give globalization a "human face" and stress its alleged benefits. The Organization's raison d'être was closely linked to the preservation of life, peace and international justice. The globalizing forces threatened the very spirit of the United Nations. A much more analytical and pluralistic examination of the effects of globalization was needed. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela supported the establishment of a new international human order based on cooperation, solidarity, complementarity and respect for sovereignty and self-determination.

81. **Mr. Ndjonkou** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that, according to the latest ILO report on global employment trends, around 200 million people were unemployed. Work was central to people's lives. Therefore, jobs often provided the greatest indicator of the success or failure of globalization. The increased prevalence of labour migration clearly demonstrated people's desire — and need — to search for employment. Three years had now passed since the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization had issued its report

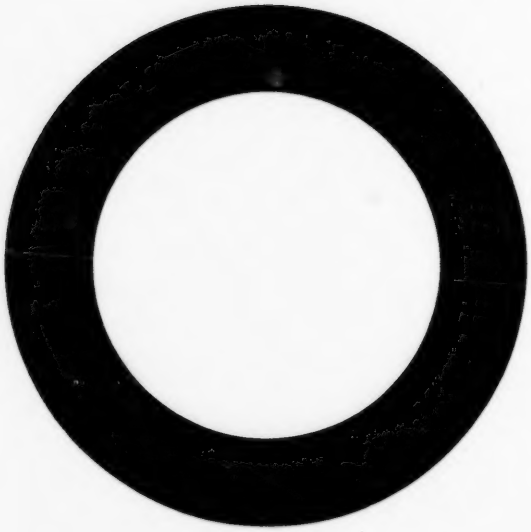
entitled "A fair globalization: creating opportunities for all". Globalization continued, yet the outcomes seemed no fairer. In many countries, inequalities had actually widened.

82. While the inadequate governance of globalization persisted, a number of areas had seen progress, indicating that attention was being devoted to the issue. The fundamental challenge today was policy coherence and increased partnerships. To that end, ILO had convened the Forum on Decent Work for a Fair Globalization, currently being held in Lisbon. The Forum brought together a diverse group of participants from the organization's constituency of Governments, employers' organizations and trade unions as well as various civil society organizations and intergovernmental institutions. Its focus was the analysis and promotion of decent work as the key for economic, social and environmental sustainability and as an opportunity to review progress towards ensuring that globalization was fair and more balanced.

83. The Forum would also focus on international labour migration, which was a central element of globalization and of efforts to create decent work opportunities for all. Globalization had facilitated linkages between national labour markets and strengthened migration's push and pull factors. There was a shared responsibility to reduce migration pressures by creating productive, freely chosen employment and decent work, thereby giving workers the right to development while working in their countries of origin. Migration would therefore become a matter of choice, not of necessity. The Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration provided a set of guidelines and best practices to guide countries in the formulation and implementation of labour migration policies, while the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, provided a normative approach for migrant protection.

84. Work was a source of dignity, stability, peace and credibility of Governments and the economic system. Since reducing decent work deficits went hand in hand with reducing the tensions behind the challenges posed by globalization, the international community must pursue coherent policies that created an environment conducive to decent work. The 2005 World Summit Outcome, the Ministerial Declaration on Employment Generation and Decent Work, adopted at the Economic and Social Council's 2006 substantive session, and resolution 2007/2 on the role of the United Nations system in providing full and productive employment and decent work for all, adopted at the Council's 2007 substantive session, provided enough valuable policy guidance for realizing that overarching goal.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.



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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 5 November 2007, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Lintonen ..... (Finland)

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07-58088 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 54: Sustainable development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*continued*) (A/C.2/62/L.13 and L.23)

Draft resolution on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

1. **Ms. Ayesha** (Pakistan) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/62/L.13 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Draft resolution on agricultural technology for development

2. **Mr. Fluss** (Israel), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/62/L.23, announced that Madagascar had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution. Agriculture had always played a crucial role in development, especially in developing countries. The draft resolution was in line with calls for action under Agenda 21 and reflected the agenda for the upcoming cycle of the Commission on Sustainable Development. He invited other delegations to become sponsors of the draft resolution.

(b) Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*) (A/C.2/62/L.16)

Draft resolution on follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

(d) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (*continued*) (A/C.2/62/L.12)

Draft resolution on protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind

(f) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*) (A/C.2/62/L.15)

Draft resolution on the Convention on Biological Diversity

(g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its twenty-fourth session (*continued*) (A/C.2/62/L.14)

Draft resolution on the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its twenty-fourth session

3. **Ms. Ayesha** (Pakistan) introduced draft resolutions A/C.2/62/L.12, L.14, L.15 and L.16 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

4. Referring also to sub-item 54 (a), she noted that the Group of 77 and China had consistently called for simultaneous action to address the challenges relating to all three pillars of sustainable development in a coordinated, integrated and balanced manner. At the national and international levels, economic, social and environmental goals should be promoted in complementary and consistent ways. The Group looked forward to discussing the various draft resolutions that would be submitted under the item, while seeking to retain a focus on poverty eradication as a prerequisite for sustained economic growth and sustainable development in developing countries.

(h) Sustainable mountain development (*continued*) (A/C.2/62/L.18)

Draft resolution on sustainable mountain development

5. **Mr. Gass** (Switzerland), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/62/L.18, announced that Eritrea and Timor-Leste had become sponsors. The sponsors looked forward to discussing the draft with the remaining membership during informal discussions and trusted that a consensus text would soon be ready for submission to the Committee.

Agenda item 55: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (*continued*) (A/C.2/62/L.22)

Draft resolution on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

6. **Ms. Ayesha** (Pakistan) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/62/L.22 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Agenda item 51: Information and communication technologies for development (A/62/492-S/2007/616)

7. **The Chairperson** said that, since the Committee did not have before it a report of the Secretary-General, its consideration of the item would be framed by statements by Member States. She stressed the continued importance of the subject. The more the international community, national Governments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders accomplished in bridging the digital divide, promoting digital opportunities and placing information and communication technologies (ICT) at the service of development, the better they would understand both the immense potential of ICT as a tool for promoting development and the scope of the tasks to be accomplished.

8. The item was being considered pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/295, which called for a comprehensive ICT strategy for the United Nations system. ICT was a valuable strategic tool for enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness and development impact of United Nations system programmes and activities. In that context, she mentioned the recent implementation of the proposal to raise the profile and impact of ICT in the Secretariat's programmatic direction by establishing the post of Chief Information Technology Officer at a policymaking level.

9. The development potential of the information revolution had been highlighted by the Assembly during its discussions on the implications of globalization in 1998 and subsequently addressed at its meeting on ICT for development in 2002. The World Summit on the Information Society, meanwhile, had formulated an agreed universal approach to creating a truly global development-oriented, inclusive and people-centred information society and defined a set of concrete actions to that end. The United Nations was spearheading the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action. In that context, she mentioned the Connect Africa Summit held recently in Rwanda, which had resulted in investment and other commitments of over $70 billion aimed at bringing broadband, high-speed and low-cost connectivity to the continent by 2012 and thereby fostering the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals.

10. The Assembly must remain actively seized of the matter. The international community had only just begun its work in building a truly inclusive and development-oriented information society. The political support and engagement of all stakeholders was essential to build momentum and make such a major undertaking possible by 2015.

11. **Mr. Bhandara** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, for the majority of the world's poor, the developmental promise of science and technology remained unfulfilled. Instead of bridging the gap, technology had often become a great divider. The growing North-South technological gulf must be bridged. Creating links between knowledge-generation and development was one of the greatest challenges facing developing countries.

12. The World Summit on the Information Society had been held to address the ever-wider digital divide facing developing countries. The Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society provided the vision and a vehicle for bridging that divide. The Group called for the full implementation of the outcomes of both phases of that Summit so as to allow developing countries to benefit fully from the potential of ICT.

13. ICT was a powerful tool for socio-economic development that offered many opportunities to disadvantaged sectors of society and, if used properly, contributed to poverty eradication and attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The creation of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society was in the best interests of all people, but particularly the large majority of the world's population who faced exclusion and in whose development modern ICT played a vital role.

14. The Internet should be managed through a multilateral, transparent and democratic process that involved Governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations. Effective monitoring of progress on the implementation of the outcomes of both phases of the World Summit on the Information Society was essential. The international community must remain engaged to ensure that the digital divide was bridged. The General Assembly should play a more active and visible role in that regard. To that end, the Group would be submitting a draft resolution requesting the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the follow-up process.

15. **Ms. Hartati** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that ICT had opened up new opportunities for attaining higher levels of development. It increased productivity; generated economic growth, job creation and employability; improved quality of life; and promoted dialogue among people, nations and civilizations. However, the digital divide was still a major challenge. As noted in the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2007*, Internet and mobile phone use, while generally on the rise, was still limited in developing countries. ICT must continue to be promoted to free the world's poor from underdevelopment, marginalization and social exclusion.

16. She expressed appreciation for the Organization's efforts to strengthen the linkage between ICT and development and increase knowledge-sharing across the entire United Nations system; commended the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other United Nations agencies for their work on reducing the digital divide; and welcomed the Organization's support for the use of open-source software for development, which was a tool not only for enhancing economic opportunities, but also for managing and harnessing information. The Organization's role in strengthening the linkages between ICT and the realization of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, must be enhanced, including by enabling and catalysing initiatives aimed at providing policy advice and technical assistance in the development of national e-strategies. She called on the Secretary-General to submit a report on progress and challenges in that regard. Furthermore, multi-stakeholder dialogue and partnership must continue to be promoted. In that regard, she welcomed the launch, in 2006, of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development.

17. ASEAN attached great importance to the development of the ICT sector. Its efforts to establish the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015 continued. The AEC Blueprint, to be adopted at the forthcoming thirteenth ASEAN Summit in Singapore, would map out detailed targets and timelines for greater economic integration. ASEAN was also committed to implementing the Vientiane Action Programme, including its provisions on the telecommunications and information technology sectors. In particular, it sought to achieve universal access to ICT infrastructure and services and strengthen cooperation and assistance on regulatory policy and strategy issues. As reflected in the Declaration adopted at the seventh meeting of ASEAN telecommunications and information technology ministers, held in Cambodia in August 2007, ASEAN would step up its efforts to ensure equal and affordable universal access to ICT services to all people, particularly those living in rural communities and rural areas.

18. The Association's efforts to improve ICT-related cooperation included the establishment of an ASEAN ICT Centre in 2006 and the ASEAN ICT Fund's first disbursement plan for 2007-2008. In addition, the ASEAN Specialized Meteorological Centre sent daily satellite images of the region's weather to each ASEAN member country and the ASEAN Earthquake Information Centre used the Internet and text messaging to transmit instantaneous information to ASEAN member countries for disaster preparedness. As a supplement to those frameworks, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center linked national tsunami early warning centres with a multi-nodal system through the exchange of real time information. ASEAN had also established ICT cooperation work plans with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. Those countries — as well as the European Union and India — had also participated in the incident drill conducted by ASEAN computer emergency response teams in July 2007. ASEAN supported the Tunis Commitment's pledge to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society.

19. Lastly, the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies had played a commendable role in promoting cooperation in the area of climate change mitigation, adaptation and financing. ASEAN hoped that the United Nations would continue along that path, including by using ICT to manage environmental data for sustainable development and disaster mitigation and preparedness.

20. **Mr. Mansour** (Tunisia) said that ICT had accentuated the disparities in the global economic system, as witnessed by the digital divide, and thus could be a source of exclusion and marginalization. On the other hand, the ICT sector had the potential to accelerate economic and human development and could therefore also be seen as promoting development.

21. The implementation of the commitments entered into at the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the

Information Society should be at the centre of the debate on ICT for development. The international community should therefore endeavour to implement the national, regional and international plans agreed at that Summit with a view to establishing an open, balanced and equitable information society.

22. While progress had been made in terms of access to ICT, the digital divide had still not been bridged since advances had been seen only in particular sectors and not in terms of modern technology as a whole. Owing to its capacity to accelerate the development process and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, ICT would determine future living standards and promote development and integration in the world economy. For developing countries, particularly the poorest ones, the digital divide was first and foremost a question of infrastructure and social investment. Thus, there was not only a technological but also a socio-economic challenge, since ICT could not replace a real development policy. The targeted integration of ICT, within a framework of international cooperation and partnership, could activate the development process and improve results.

23. His delegation welcomed Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/8, which requested the Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development annually on the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society. It also welcomed the forthcoming holding of the 2007 Internet Governance Forum meeting in Rio de Janeiro as an occasion to continue the debate on the Internet that had begun in Athens in November 2006.

24. **Mr. Chen** Ming (China) welcomed the tremendous amount of work done by the United Nations and the International Telecommunication Union in implementing the outcomes of the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. It was important to build a people-centred, development-oriented information society to narrow the digital divide, achieve the Millennium Development Goals, promote economic development and facilitate the dissemination and application of knowledge.

25. China had made encouraging progress in ICT development in recent years and such technologies had become an important means of supporting China's socio-economic development. The contribution of information technology to the economy was rising steadily: its added value had accounted for 7.2 per cent of GDP in 2005 and 16.6 per cent of economic growth. More than 30 per cent of China's total exports were manufactured electronic and information technology products.

26. However, China also needed to urgently address such problems as its inadequate capacity for information technology innovation, the insufficient tapping of its information technology potential and the widening digital divide. In order to accelerate the movement towards an information society, his Government had published a national strategy for ICT development, 2006-2020, with the following goals: building an integrated information structure throughout the nation; greatly enhancing national capacity for information technology innovation; optimizing the entire structure of the information technology industry; providing robust safeguards for national information security; achieving tangible results in ICT-enabled social and economic development; establishing a new model for industrialization; creating a much improved institutional environment and developing a complete policy system for ICT development; and boosting the capacity of Chinese nationals to apply information technology. When all those goals had been met, China would have laid a solid foundation for an information society.

27. The strategic priorities of ICT for development in China were, inter alia: promoting ICT-enabled national economic development; facilitating e-government; fostering an advanced network culture; working towards ICT-enabled social development; improving integrated information infrastructure; strengthening the development and use of information resources; and enhancing the competitiveness of the information technology industry.

28. The use of ICT for development should be guided by demand, allowing the market to play a fundamental role in resource distribution. The general public should also find ICT accessible, affordable and easy to use. Furthermore, ICT should be allowed to achieve its full potential in the promotion of economic, political, cultural, social and military development.

29. The international community needed to establish and improve mechanisms for international exchange and cooperation related to ICT for development while also upholding the principles of equal cooperation and mutual benefit. It also needed to combat Internet-

related crimes and build an international governance mechanism for the Internet based on equal sovereignty. The United Nations should set an example in sharing knowledge in the area of development and should continue to play a leading role in building an information society.

30. **Mr. Mubin** (Malaysia) said that the digital divide was one of the major challenges facing developing countries and that much more could be done to eliminate it. While the multi-stakeholder approach towards ICT advancement was a step in the right direction, mainstreaming ICT for the sake of development alone was insufficient. In order to bridge the digital divide effectively, the technology that made the advancement of knowledge possible must be widely shared.

31. Beyond the issues of physical access and connectivity, ICT advancement also had a huge impact on economic and social development. As the world moved towards becoming a "global village", it was important to continue to retain the richness and diversity of ICT content, culture, values and communities. Content issues should dominate policies and strategies geared towards generating new economic wealth and fostering job creation. The new knowledge economy should also provide effective solutions for poverty eradiation and economic development. The real value of ICT could be better realized when innovation provided greater access to global resources and information. It was therefore important to provide an enabling environment for innovation. To that end, the promotion and advancement of ICT must be facilitated by a proper intellectual property framework that benefited the poor and the disadvantaged in particular.

32. Since knowledge and ICT-enabled development were a means to an end, not an end in themselves, they must be linked to overall development programmes. Many readily available technologies could have a significant socio-economic impact on development. For example, the use of advanced ICT could easily enable farmers in developing countries to increase their productivity, which was an invaluable tool for eradicating poverty.

33. In order to ensure that ICT for development was used appropriately, it should, inter alia: be championed by the United Nations and other multilateral agencies; become a networking platform for economic wealth creation and for enhancing societal value; focus on content, applications, community, cultures and other non-technical issues; and be centred on information security, thereby providing a trusted environment.

34. The establishment of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development as a model for a multi-stakeholder platform within the United Nations system would facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The international community should lend its full support to the Global Alliance as a platform for engaging all United Nations stakeholders as well as the World Bank and other regional development banks. Such a global platform could promote ICT policy dialogues and partnerships for action. Malaysia's active participation therein had enabled it to benefit from a wide variety of expertise in the field of ICT for development and to turn its ideas into reality, particularly the Cyber Development Corps, an initiative to promote capacity-building through South-South cooperation.

35. Within the framework of the World Congress on Information Technology to be held in Kuala Lumpur in May 2008, Malaysia would also host a high-level meeting of the Global Alliance. His delegation invited all Member States to actively participate in that high-level meeting, which was an opportunity to discuss the future agenda of ICT for development and Alliance activities.

36. **Mr. Naik** (India) said that ICT for development was of particular importance to developing countries in view of its immense potential to assist them in their development efforts in almost every field. His delegation therefore called for concerted efforts by the United Nations to assist developing countries in acquiring such technologies.

37. The global economy had recently seen a shift from agriculture and manufacturing towards services, which presented a special opportunity for developing countries. By effectively using their comparative advantage in terms of human capital, developing countries could hope to reap the benefits of that shift more equitably and should also witness an increase in employment. However, their primary challenge was to develop appropriate human resources through capacity-building and to make ICT more affordable and user-friendly. The international community should therefore extend its technical and financial support, particularly through the United Nations, to ensure that developing

countries could make ICT accessible to millions. In that regard, his delegation supported the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and its enhanced mandate on the follow-up process to the World Summit on the Information Society.

38. India had been striving to take advantage of the information technology revolution. Information technology-enabled services, in particular, represented 5 per cent of India's economic output, as opposed to only 1.2 per cent at the turn of the century. Business process outsourcing had been a key element in the rapid growth of global services trade, leading to the acceptance of an information technology-based global delivery model. The employment generated from the growth in the information technology sector had had a positive impact on the socio-economic dynamics of his country, giving rise to a number of additional businesses. The information technology sector also testified to the fact that the private and State sectors could work together successfully.

39. His Government was committed to harnessing the benefits of ICT in diverse areas and, to that end, had launched an ambitious programme to promote e-governance at all levels and initiated a programme to provide information technology to the most remote parts of the country. It was also working to make ICT affordable to the general public. Within the framework of South-South cooperation, India had also been providing assistance in setting up a connectivity project in 53 African countries and in establishing information technology training centres in several partner countries in Africa and Asia.

40. **Ms. Niyomthai** (Thailand) said that the United Nations system should explore possibilities for multilateral public-private partnerships to promote capacity-building for developing countries. Thailand took note with satisfaction of the ongoing work of the United Nations on the use of open-source software for development. Thailand had made progress in the use of ICT to further its development goals. In 2003, the e-Government Roadmap had been launched. The Ministry of Information and Communications Technology had been established as the competent agency to systematically build up the country's ICT capacity. Education was an important tool for promoting human-centred development in order to eradicate poverty and achieve sustained economic and social development. In 1995, the Government had initiated a long-distance learning project through which lessons were transmitted via satellite to over 3,000 schools throughout the country, including in remote rural areas.

41. The Government had initiated many development projects to improve the standard of living of the people through telecommunication technology. Remote sensing and a Geographic Information System mapping mechanism had been applied to monitor illicit crops and promote crop-substitution programmes, as well as for land-use and disaster-prevention projects. The first Thai Earth Observation System (THEOS) was scheduled to be launched in December 2007 with the capability to explore and monitor activities involving the utilization of natural resources, agricultural land, forestry and water resources, as well as urban growth. With the launch of THEOS, Thailand would take on a new role of data provider for various applications in other interested countries.

42. **Mr. Al Khaili** (United Arab Emirates) said that his country included in its development plans policies to promote ICT. It had acceded to numerous international instruments and participated in conferences and summits in that field. It reaffirmed its commitment to international efforts to build information societies for human advancement; understanding and cooperation among peoples; the dialogue of civilizations; establishment of the foundations of justice, equality and freedom; and respect for State sovereignty, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations calling for respect for the human being and cultural and religious diversity.

43. National legislation guaranteed the free flow of information and access to sources of knowledge and culture via global communication channels, provided that personal freedoms, human dignity and the country's established religious and political beliefs were not compromised. That openness had led to a flourishing ICT industry, a field for which the country had become a world centre, hosting conferences and even film festivals.

44. His country's policy on ICT for development was aimed at establishing the necessary infrastructure for an information and communication environment covering the entire country and ensuring access by all at reasonable cost. In the economic sphere, it called for investment in information technology and the knowledge economy based on public-private partnership that included enormous Government projects, such as

Dubai Internet City, Dubai Silicon Oasis, and Dubai Media City, which included Dubai Studio City, devoted to cinema and television production. In addition, a $54 million fund, the first of its kind in the Middle East, had been established for the development of the country's information sector. In the cultural sphere, policy was aimed at implanting technological culture and offering the opportunity to all segments of society to enjoy its benefits, which meant introducing ICT curricula at all educational levels, creating specialized university faculties and ensuring adequate training in that area.

45. It was important to provide financial and technical assistance to developing countries to enable them to put information technology in the service of development.

46. **Mr. Prasai** (Nepal) said that the application of ICT for development should be a shared global responsibility. Additional commitments from developed countries were needed for the transfer of technology and resources to the developing countries, especially the least developed countries. The multi-stakeholder approach of the Global Alliance should be strengthened. The Geneva and Tunis outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society should be implemented effectively, with increased opportunities for applying ICT for development.

47. In Nepal, wireless technology provided tremendous benefits for people in rural areas who otherwise would not have access to ICT. That window of opportunity should be used for advancing the use of ICT for development. The availability of cheaper computers would also facilitate their use in developing countries. Nepal encouraged the proposal for "one laptop per child", especially in the least developed countries. However, the application of ICT in rural areas should respect the cultural and traditional values of societies. Nepal had integrated ICT into its national development policies and programmes. Community and FM radio broadcasts had become highly successful, and broadband Internet service was being expanded, although on a limited scale. The Government was seeking to attract investment and had set up an institutional mechanism to develop the ICT sector. Additional resources for ICT capacity-building were needed from Nepal's development partners.

48. A just, inclusive and pro-poor information and communication order should be at the centre of development. It would be crucial to have a broad multi-stakeholder agreement on future action, including on the transfer of technology, additional commitments for resources to use ICT for development, and an agreement to make the advances in ICT available to all without artificial barriers.

49. **Mr. Kononuchenko** (Russian Federation) said that the United Nations should lead a coordinated approach to the use of ICT to achieve development goals, close the digital divide and develop a global information society. The Russian Federation was well placed to assist in attaining those goals thanks to its experience in adopting the latest ICT using the most economical methods, which was extremely important when resources were limited. The first stage of activity of the Global Alliance had proceeded well; its practical work must be clearly focused on the goals and tasks agreed by Member States.

50. **Mr. Filip** (Inter-Parliamentary Union) said that additional reflection on the role of parliaments in the information society was both necessary and timely. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in conjunction with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and with the assistance of a number of particularly active parliaments, had therefore launched in 2006 a new and inclusive project known as the Global Centre for Information and Communication Technologies in Parliament. The Centre was an innovative example of partnership between the United Nations and the world of parliaments. Its philosophy was one of cooperation and sharing of good practices among parliaments.

51. The activities of IPU included an international conference, hosted by the Italian Chamber of Deputies in March 2007, which had addressed the issue of the role of parliaments in the information society. The first World e-Parliament Conference, held in Geneva in October 2007, had examined the policy and technical aspects of how parliaments were using ICT. In countries where resources were scarce, one of the first objectives of a democratic parliament must be to ensure that legislation was widely accessible to citizens. The Union was committed to working with other like-minded partners to develop and share good practices in the use of open standards, open-source software and parliamentary websites. The adoption of such practices would help parliaments become more effective and transparent.

52. The Union was also looking forward to the publication of the first Global Report on ICT in Parliament in early 2008, which would establish much-needed baseline data on how parliaments around the world were using ICT. Another important initiative in 2008 would focus on how ICT could reduce barriers to access to information for people with disabilities, and specifically the role parliaments could play in promoting access and appropriate technologies. It was to be hoped that the structured relationship between IPU and the United Nations would reinforce the conviction that the two organizations could cooperate over the long term, share experiences, take joint initiatives and forge common policies.

Agenda item 129: Programme planning

53. **The Chairperson** said that she had been informed by the Secretariat that, at the present juncture, there were no matters that would require the Committee's attention under item 129. She therefore suggested that the item should remain open until the Committee finished its work on 30 November, in case there was a need for the Committee to be seized of any issues under it.

54. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

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Later: Mr. Saleh (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Lebanon)
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Agenda item 57: Groups of countries in special situations (A/62/488)

(a) Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/62/79-E/2007/63, A/62/79/Corr.1-E/2007/63/Corr.1, A/62/322 and A/62/216)

(b) Specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation (A/62/226, A/62/256, A/62/256/Corr.1, A/C.2/62/4 and A/C.2/62/5)

1. **Mr. Diarra** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 (A/62/79-E/2007/63), drew particular attention to problems which the least developed countries, especially those in Africa, faced with respect to health, malnutrition and hunger. He emphasized that a genuine partnership between least developed countries and donors was crucial to the success of the Brussels Programme of Action.

2. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the advocacy strategy on the effective and timely implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 (A/62/322), he said that the challenges facing the least developed countries were daunting but not insurmountable. Increased and timely support by the international community was vital to overcoming them. His Office would therefore give priority to mobilization of international support and resources for least developed countries, advocacy to encourage development partners to take concrete measures in favour of least developed countries, and the full mobilization and coordination of the United Nations system in support of those countries.

3. He was also pleased to introduce the report of the Secretary-General on the status of preparations for the midterm review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries (A/62/226). In that connection, he drew attention to the report of the Thematic Meeting on Transit Transport Infrastructure Development held in Burkina Faso in June 2007 (A/62/256).

4. The Thematic Meeting on Trade and Trade Facilitation held in Mongolia in August 2007 had, inter alia, identified numerous bottlenecks affecting trade facilitation in the target countries; underscored the urgent need for landlocked developing and transit countries to implement trade facilitation measures already enacted; called for customs reforms at the national and regional levels; and proposed objectives that landlocked developing and transit countries should pursue in the trade facilitation negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO).

5. His Office had intensified its advocacy work in anticipation of the midterm review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. An e-discussion launched in cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and negotiation issues in WTO should lead to concrete negotiation strategies for securing benefits from multilateral and regional trade negotiations and would provide an opportunity for those countries to exchange experience among themselves and with developed countries. He invited the Committee to join the discussion. His Office was also working with the regional commissions on regional reviews.

6. The midterm review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, which should be conducted at the highest level, would provide the opportunity further to galvanize global partnerships on behalf of one of the three most vulnerable groups of countries.

7. **Ms. Tariq Aziz** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that it was a source of serious concern that progress in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action had again been insufficient and uneven. The full and timely implementation of the seven commitments in the Programme of Action was essential if those countries

were to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

8. The international community should address the challenges identified by the least developed countries in the Cotonou Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. It was also critical for development partners to support the transition strategies of countries graduating from the list of least developed countries in order to avoid any abrupt disruption of their development processes. The Group of 77 and China urged the international community to pave the way for the convening of a fourth United Nations conference on the least developed countries. Coordinated action by the United Nations and its agencies, funds and programmes would facilitate that effort.

9. Assistance to landlocked developing countries had remained inadequate and the Group of 77 and China hoped that the midterm review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action would yield positive results on their behalf. Donor countries and multilateral and regional financial and development institutions should provide landlocked and transit developing countries with technical and financial assistance, particularly for transport, storage and communications infrastructure and other transit-related facilities. Multilateral institutions must also do more to encourage public and private sector investment in transit transport infrastructure, for example, by offering investment guarantees. International financial and development institutions should also make voluntary contributions to the trust fund established by the Secretary-General to support activities related to the follow-up to the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

10. The Group of 77 and China urged the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to complete work as soon as possible on an acceptable set of indicators and benchmarks with which to monitor the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. The implementation of the Programme of Action should be considered in the context of all internationally agreed development goals, not solely the Millennium Development Goals.

11. **Mr. Silvestre** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of both the Almaty Programme of Action and the Brussels Programme of Action. The 2006 midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action had concluded that there had been some progress. Some countries had almost reached the 7 per cent target for economic growth and those growth trends were continuing, with just a few countries lagging behind. Despite the high rate of population growth, especially in Africa, some of the social indicators had improved. There were still areas of concern, however, including the negative impacts of environmental degradation and climate change. Appropriate development cooperation should be revisited with a view to enhancing the adaptation capacity of the least developed countries to climate change.

12. In relation to commitment 5, enhancing the role of trade in development, the European Union had recently approved a European strategy on aid for trade that would assist developing countries, including the least developed ones, to integrate better into the rules-based world trading system and to use trade more effectively for poverty eradication. That strategy would ensure the quality of Aid for Trade and the continuity of pledges. The European Union was striving to increase its collective expenditure on trade-related assistance to €2 billion a year from 2010, which would complement other European Union initiatives to promote trade as a tool for economic growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction. For example, the Everything but Arms initiative provided duty-free and quota-free market access to all exports from the least developed countries.

13. The Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries was an extremely useful instrument and the high-level donor pledging conference organized by the Government of Sweden in September 2007 to mobilize financial support for the Enhanced Integrated Framework had resulted in pledges amounting to

around 75 per cent of the total target of $250 million for the period 2007-2011.

14. In relation to commitment 7, mobilizing financial resources, the European Union continued to be the world's major source of development assistance and in 2006 had provided €46.9 billion, or over half of total ODA to developing countries. In terms of ODA performance and the Monterrey targets set in 2002, European Union member States had exceeded the collective target of 0.39 per cent of GNI, reaching 0.42 per cent in 2006. From 0.15 per cent to 0.20 per cent of GNI should be allocated to ODA for the least developed countries.

15. Further efforts in relation to implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness included the recently approved European Union Code of Conduct for Development Cooperation that should contribute to reducing transaction costs and ensuring better complementarity among donors and better synchronization of programming calendars and the planning and budget cycles of partner countries.

16. In addition to numerous bilateral debt relief initiatives, European Union member States had been involved in the launching of both the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI). Important progress was being made in increasing debt relief to the poorest countries through the implementation of the MDRI by the African Development Fund, the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Development Association and the International Monetary Fund. All those efforts were designed to free national resources for other development-related purposes.

17. Some European Union member States had made a consistent effort to identify innovative sources of funding for development and voluntary initiatives included the International Drug Purchase Facility, the International Finance Facility for Immunization and the advanced market commitment initiative. Further consideration should be given to financing mechanisms for environmental activities, particularly those relating to climate change in developing countries.

18. As agreed in the Monterrey Consensus, and reaffirmed in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, every country must take primary responsibility for its own development and the role of good governance, sound policies and national development strategies could not be overemphasized. Such strategies should be oriented to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

19. A smooth transition should be ensured to allow countries graduating from the list of least developed countries to prepare for full integration into the global economy and to avoid disruption of their development plans and programmes. The European Union was ready to work on measures to help those countries to adjust to their change of status and in that context he congratulated Samoa on its graduation. The improved situation in many least developed countries and the graduation of Cape Verde, Maldives and Samoa strengthened the credibility of the list and increased the determination to fight poverty.

20. Despite the progress achieved in implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, there was still much more to accomplish in order to help the least developed countries to overcome poverty. The advocacy strategy on the effective and timely implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action (A/62/322) was extremely important and the European Union was willing to be an active stakeholder in that process. The Istanbul Declaration on the Least Developed Countries: Time for Action was another valuable instrument in the context of sharing experiences and good practices, and comparing situations and assessing difficulties during the implementation of commitments under the Brussels Programme of Action.

21. The specific vulnerabilities of landlocked and transit developing countries went well beyond the lack of territorial access to the sea and geographical isolation. Inadequate infrastructure, inefficient administrative mechanisms, insufficient FDI, time-consuming customs procedures and a lack of public sector control and trade competitiveness were just a few of the constraints that had adverse impacts on their socio-economic development.

22. The European Union was also firmly committed to the holistic implementation of the five priorities of the Almaty Programme of Action. The response to the transit problems of landlocked developing countries required a multidimensional approach that included the development of adequate national transport networks and efficient transit systems, the promotion of regional or subregional economic integration and the encouragement of FDI in economic activities that were

not distance-sensitive. Such development should be sustainable from an economic, social, financial and institutional point of view, as well as being environmentally sound and consistent with the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and should take gender and health issues into account.

23. Regional integration and cooperation, sustainable transit transport systems and trade should be at the core of actions to support the landlocked developing countries, as the provision of an efficient transport infrastructure was a key element for competitiveness, economic growth and social development. The European Union had issued a communication on promoting sustainable transport in developing countries.

24. Another major challenge for many landlocked developing countries was the creation of affordable, reliable and sustainable transit transport systems. The European Union was already a significant donor in that area, providing financial and technical assistance for the development of sustainable policies and strategies and transport infrastructure and services. Recently it had approved the European Union-Africa Partnership on Infrastructure with a view to supporting programmes for interconnectivity at the regional and continental level in Africa, thereby strengthening regional integration. It was important to consider regional integration and cooperation issues when addressing the problems of landlocked developing countries. In addition to continued support for institution-building and capacity-building, there was also a need for an enhanced and strengthened political dialogue at the regional level.

25. The European Union was the most important trading partner for the landlocked developing countries. Although trade could be a powerful engine for growth and development, the trading system alone could not solve the many development problems of those countries. The European Union was therefore working on issues related to Aid for Trade and in that framework on mechanisms for the beneficial integration of landlocked developing countries into the world trading system. It was also funding several projects for trade facilitation and customs modernization in landlocked developing countries. Trade-related assistance would continue to be an important part of development cooperation.

26. Fair competition between operators and transportation modes would improve the efficiency of services and cost effectiveness. A sectoral approach focusing on strategic networks and regional transport corridors, and increased financing of sector development programmes rather than of individual projects, were vital. It was important, however, for the landlocked and transit developing countries themselves to assume ownership of appropriately designed poverty reduction strategies and national policies that took account of trade and the modernization of their transport sector, in order to complement regional initiatives.

27. The European Union welcomed the progress achieved in implementing the Almaty Programme of Action and commended the efforts made to prepare for the midterm review of its implementation (A/62/226). Two thematic meetings had already been held that year: one in Burkina Faso in June 2007 on transport infrastructure development; and the other in Mongolia at the end of August on trade and trade facilitation.

28. *Mr. Saleh (Lebanon), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

29. **Ms. Jahan** (Bangladesh), speaking on behalf of the least developed countries, said that the international community should give urgent attention to the marginalization of those countries in the global development process. The Brussels Programme of Action set specific goals and targets, with action-oriented commitments in seven important areas, and outlined the complementary responsibilities of the least developed countries and their development partners. Fulfilling all the commitments could make a real difference in the lives of millions in those countries.

30. In 2006, the General Assembly had undertaken a midterm comprehensive review of the Brussels Programme of Action and the least developed countries had adopted the Cotonou Strategy for its further implementation, which identified obstacles, constraints and challenges. All Member States and especially the donor countries, United Nations organizations and other relevant entities should implement the recommendations in the Cotonou Strategy.

31. Most of the least developed countries had prepared their development strategies and adopted sound macroeconomic policies and relatively open trade regimes. They had also carried out reforms to promote good governance, democracy, human rights

and public management, to combat graft and to protect and empower the most vulnerable, namely women and children. Many had embarked on decentralization and the strengthening of local governance. Nevertheless, at the domestic level, low productivity, weak infrastructure, rapid population growth, unemployment, environmental degradation and climate change remained a huge challenge for most of them. Lack of security was also a serious concern in some countries.

32. The economic growth that had begun in the 1990s had brought some progress, particularly in terms of a few indicators in the areas of health and education. Despite strong pro-poor policies, however, the impact on poverty reduction had often remained insignificant. Unless the external environment was also changed, the efforts of the least developed countries, including those in the transition phase for graduation, would have no impact in terms of achieving internationally agreed development goals. She expressed appreciation to those development partners that had already fulfilled their commitments and called upon others to do so, especially in relation to the least developed countries.

33. Trade was critically important and preferential market access, special and differential treatment and trade capacity-building for the least developed countries had been the cornerstone of the Brussels Programme of Action. Although the share of the least developed countries in world merchandise trade had risen from 0.79 to 0.83 per cent in 2006, it was still far from regaining the 1960 level of 2.5 per cent. The current trading system was biased against least developed countries and harmful subsidies, tariff escalation schemes, non-tariff restrictions and artificial standards imposed by industrialized countries had to be reversed. The Doha negotiations were now moving forward and should be concluded as soon as possible. All products from the least developed countries should be granted duty-free and quota-free market access without any restrictions. All developed countries, and the developing countries in a position to do so, should grant such access on a mandatory basis, with simple and transparent rules of origin. The least developed countries were increasingly marginalized in South-South trade. Some developing countries had offered duty-free and quota-free market access and she invited others to follow their example.

34. She called on WTO members to ensure that any of the least developed countries seeking to become members of WTO could do so by fulfilling those commitments that were commensurate with their level of development, as provided for in the Brussels Programme of Action.

35. Almost 72 per cent of the population of the least developed countries lived in rural areas and depended on agriculture. The low level of agricultural productivity in those countries was further exacerbated by the adverse terms of trade and high subsidies in export markets. Cotton subsidies, for example, depressed the world price by an estimated 12 per cent. Full implementation of the commitment contained in the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration to eliminate cotton subsidies was critically important.

36. Trade capacity-building was urgently needed. The Aid for Trade Initiative should assist the least developed countries to address their supply-side constraints and the erosion of preferences. She welcomed the donors' pledges made recently in Stockholm for the Enhanced Integrated Framework for trade-related technical assistance. The Framework should be provided with increased, predictable and additional resources on a multi-year basis.

37. The volume of ODA received by the least developed countries was much less than the commitments made and was currently around 0.08 per cent of donors' GNI, compared to 0.09 per cent in 1990. Furthermore, donors' assistance to the least developed countries remained highly concentrated and involved high transaction costs. The donor countries should fulfil their commitments to achieving the target of 0.2 per cent of GNI by 2010. The Third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness to be held in September 2008 should address all those critical issues.

38. The multilateral negotiations in WTO provided a framework to address the temporary movement of labour under mode 4 of the General Agreement on Trade in Services. Little progress had been made so far, despite the critical need for full market access for all categories of service providers from the least developed countries.

39. The debt relief granted under the HIPC and MDRI initiatives had released some resources for poverty reduction and human development and it was important to extend those programmes to all the least developed countries. All their outstanding debt, both bilateral and multilateral, should be written off without further delay and the initiatives should be

complemented by grants and other unconditional assistance to endure debt sustainability.

40. The least developed countries and some other countries with vulnerable coastlines would be disproportionately affected by climate change. The post-Kyoto regime should be based on more realistic and legally binding emission reduction targets and specific commitments should be made to provide adequate resources for the adaptation needs of the least developed countries. Member States should also strive to ensure adequate protection of climate change refugees, who would become more numerous in the future.

41. Unfortunately, the special circumstances of the least developed countries were not adequately covered in the Secretary-General's reports. In the future, the Secretary-General might wish to include a section with data and information on the least developed countries in all reports on economic and social issues, as a means of analysing the progress made in those countries on a sectoral basis.

42. The annual review of the implementation of commitments made to implement the Brussels Programme of Action was undertaken by the Economic and Social Council during its substantive session. The international community had agreed to facilitate the participation of the least developed countries in an appropriate multilateral forum. A trust fund had been created for that purpose in the Office of the High Representative, but in recent years had failed to generate the necessary resources. The Secretary-General should take appropriate measures to allocate regular budget resources to cover the participation of two representatives from each least developed country in the annual review of implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.

43. The supportive role of the Office of the High Representative in promoting the causes of the least developed countries was indispensable. She welcomed the appointment of Mr. Diarra as the new High Representative, but was deeply concerned that he was also to be given additional responsibilities that could seriously undermine his original mandate as provided for in General Assembly resolution 56/227. They could also erode the particular focus on the least developed countries which was the key objective of the Office.

44. Full implementation of the advocacy strategy on the effective and timely implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action would yield good results and all the necessary resources should be provided. The Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries was to be held before the end of the decade in order to make a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and to decide on subsequent action. She called on the international community to begin the preparations for that Conference and invited offers from countries interested in hosting the event.

45. **Mr. Maema** (Lesotho), speaking on behalf of member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the Community had formulated a regional strategic development plan in 2001 to provide a clear direction for its long-term policies and programmes. The plan was intended to advance regional integration and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and sustainable development.

46. The Brussels Programme of Action remained an essential framework for a global partnership between the least developed countries and their development partners. It provided goals and targets, with action-oriented commitments to support the development of the least developed countries. It was a very important agreement, not only for the development efforts of the least developed countries, but also for their partners' ODA strategies and plans.

47. The least developed countries acknowledged that they bore primary responsibility for their social and economic development and for years had pursued policies that promoted economic growth and sustainable development. Several of the least developed countries had recently graduated into the middle-income category, a clear testimony to their commitment to fighting poverty and underdevelopment. The report of the Secretary-General (A/62/322) showed that the least developed countries had achieved economic growth averaging 6.5 per cent per annum between 2001 and 2005. Regrettably, that growth had not led to significant poverty reduction in many countries and most of the least developed countries in the SADC region had not achieved the Brussels Programme of Action target of 7 per cent annual economic growth. Debt-servicing was still a problem for many SADC least developed countries. In view of current trends, many of those countries were unlikely to achieve the goals and objectives set out in

the Brussels Programme of Action and other internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. In view of the continuing lack of adequate financial resources available to the least developed countries, increased ODA remained essential. SADC called for more concerted efforts to scale up ODA and to improve aid effectiveness in accordance with the Paris Declaration on that subject.

48. The United Nations system and other development partners should focus on enhancing the productive capacity of the least developed countries. Agricultural development would go a long way in alleviating poverty and hunger. Priority in development assistance should also be given to technology transfer and the development of physical infrastructure, in order to improve the productivity and competitiveness of the least developed countries.

49. SADC countries continued to be handicapped by poor infrastructure, low levels of technology including information technology, commodity dependency, food shortages, effects of climate change, natural disasters and widespread HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other communicable diseases. Those challenges were not insurmountable, but partnership from the international community was needed to tackle them effectively. The international community, and particularly the developed partners, should fulfil their commitments regarding ODA and debt relief measures. Until development partners recognized the critical importance of honouring their commitments, there was the risk of failure to achieve development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Predictable aid flows, technology transfer, provision of technical and financial assistance, human and institutional capacity-building, improved market access and increased FDI were therefore essential.

50. The main objective of the Almaty Programme of Action was to address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and establish a new global framework for developing efficient transit transport systems in those countries and their transit neighbours. The overarching goal was to forge partnerships to overcome the special problems of landlocked developing countries. Inadequate infrastructure was a major obstacle to establishing the efficient transit transport systems that would enable landlocked and transit developing countries to achieve effective integration into the international trading system. Other important factors were efficient transport and communications infrastructure and trade facilitation, as their goods had to move across additional borders. The review of the Almaty Programme of Action to be conducted at the General Assembly's sixty-third session should identify constraints and challenges and devise concrete strategies to expedite and enhance implementation. He stressed the importance of adequate preparation to ensure the success of the review meeting and commended all who had contributed to the success of the two regional preparatory meetings held in Burkina Faso in June 2007 and Mongolia in August 2007.

51. SADC continued to tackle transit transport challenges through an accelerated programme of spatial development initiatives, also known as development corridors. Key infrastructure was identified for immediate development, followed by the mobilization of private investment along the corridors to ensure sustainable development activities. In addition, a programme to harmonize and streamline customs procedures and instruments as part of trade facilitation efforts was under implementation. He called on the international community to support SADC in those efforts.

52. **Mr. Exantus** (Haiti), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the problems faced by the least developed countries required the international community at large to come to the aid of their leaders in designing and implementing measures to relieve the tragic conditions in which more than 800 million individuals were living.

53. While most members of CARICOM were middle-income countries, one of them did belong to the category of the least developed countries. The CARICOM countries considered it a duty to extend their sustainable development efforts in order to assist Haiti, which was even more seriously affected than the rest of the members by the economic and climatic vulnerabilities facing them all.

54. While the midterm review of the Brussels Programme of Action (A/61/173) did note some progress by the least developed countries, their socio-economic situation remained generally precarious. Three years before the end of the Brussels Programme of Action, the chances of most of those countries reaching the objectives of the Programme, to

say nothing of the Millennium Development Goals, remained slim. Living conditions in the least developed countries were not improving and in some cases were worsening, despite the efforts of their leaders and those of the development partners, because too little attention had been paid to the deadlines for the objectives contained in the Programme of Action. It was still possible to achieve the objectives by 2010, but only if the development partners resolved to accept the challenge of a heightened solidarity by adopting innovative measures.

55. The Cotonou Strategy was not intended to supplant the Brussels Programme of Action: its purpose was to recommend corrective and reinforcing measures to be taken before 2010. If the goals were to be met, all development partners should re-examine all the types of assistance, including official development assistance, foreign direct investment, technical cooperation, trade, debt relief and so on.

56. The ongoing decline in official development assistance since the launching of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative illustrated the failure of the criterion of additionality: what was given by one hand was taken back by the other. CARICOM appealed urgently to the development partners that had not yet done so to honour as soon as possible their commitment to provide official development assistance to the least developed countries equivalent to 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of their GNP.

57. Trade was a powerful engine of economic growth and development, but the current world trade system kept the least developed countries on the fringes of globalization, excluded from taking advantage of it. Emphasis must be maintained on the development aspect of the Doha Round. Rapid conclusion of those negotiations was imperative if the least developed countries were finally to enjoy duty-free and quota-free access to world markets for their products. Subsidies and all other artificial barriers to trade should be eliminated.

58. Development partners must respond to the trade-related needs of the least developed countries by a significant increase in the contributions to the Trust Fund of the Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance, as well as by operationalization of the Aid for Trade initiative. With reference to the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative, CARICOM stressed that additionality was supposed to be a key element of those initiatives and also called for total forgiveness of all the debt of the least developed countries.

59. **Ms. Diallo** (Mali), speaking on behalf of the group of landlocked developing countries, said that, if those countries were to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, it was essential that they enjoy the advantages offered by globalization. To that end, their products needed to reach world markets with a degree of competitiveness comparable to those of the other developing countries. Accordingly, the Almaty Programme of Action had clearly defined the actions to be undertaken in five priority areas: fundamental transit policy issues, infrastructure development and maintenance, international trade and trade facilitation, international support measures, and implementation and review.

60. Primary responsibility for the implementation of the Programme of Action lay with States. The Second Committee should therefore adopt a draft resolution setting forth the details of the organization of the midterm review, which must include the effective participation of all stakeholders. She appealed to donor countries to make voluntary contributions for the organization of the midterm review.

61. Within the framework of that review, two thematic ministerial meetings had been organized, one on transit transport infrastructure development, held in Ouagadougou, and one on trade and trade facilitation held in Ulan Bator. Both meetings had highlighted the major challenges still confronting the landlocked developing countries, despite regional efforts to establish free trade zones and trade corridors. The final document of the Ouagadougou meeting had emphasized that transport infrastructures were seriously underdeveloped, unsuitable and outdated, and that the costs of bringing products to the coast remained very high, sometimes as much as 40 per cent of the cost price. Likewise, the meeting in Ulan Bator had highlighted the small share of the landlocked developing countries in world trade, largely because of longer transit times for goods and higher costs.

62. For those reasons, the landlocked developing countries called urgently for the conscientious implementation of the provisions of the Almaty Programme of Action with regard to trade and trade facilitation. In that connection they hoped fervently for a rapid conclusion to the Doha Round, taking into

account their specific needs, as enumerated in the Asunción Platform and approved by the WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, many landlocked developing countries were not yet members of WTO and she called for support for their membership applications.

63. Other challenges not reviewed in Almaty, in particular the effects of climate change and soaring prices of oil products, weighed heavily on the economy of the landlocked developing countries. In addition, as a result of the destruction of transport and transit infrastructures by torrential rains and floods, some States were often cut off from the rest of the world for long periods, causing immense losses in export incomes. She therefore hoped that donor countries would keep their promises of massive, immediate and predictable funding made at the 2005 World Summit.

64. As the Office of the High Representative played an essential role in mobilizing and coordinating the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, the Group urged the Secretary-General to provide the Office as quickly as possible with the resources it needed in order to meet fully the responsibilities assigned to it.

65. **Ms. Zvereva** (Russian Federation) said that the international community should not ignore the problems of countries in special situations: the least developed countries and countries with small and vulnerable economies, including those that were landlocked. Progress in those countries would be a deciding factor for achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

66. The outcome of the high-level meeting on the midterm comprehensive global review of implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action had been positive. Her country supported the Declaration of that meeting adopted by the Assembly in resolution 61/1, which took full account of the concerns of the international community in relation to the problems of the least developed countries and reflected the commitment of Member States to cooperate in implementing the Brussels Programme of Action. It also gave an objective assessment of the achievements and problems encountered in the course of implementation.

67. The Russian Federation was taking specific measures to support the development of the least developed countries, including reduction of import duties and a special preferential regime for their imports. There were no import customs duties or limitations on the quantity of imports, nor were any anti-dumping, countervailing or protectionist measures applied.

68. Her country was actively working on multilateral measures to reduce the debt burden and provide development aid for the least developed countries in the context of the Paris Club and other international organizations. The Russian Federation had always supported the HIPC Initiative, under which it had written off debt from African countries amounting to 11.3 billion dollars. It also welcomed the establishment by other countries of a special trade regime for the least developed countries in response to the appeal made at the Millennium Summit.

69. The Russian delegation valued the support of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for consideration of the issues affecting those countries throughout the United Nations system. The implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action should involve intergovernmental mechanisms such as the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board, and its Sessional Committee on Least Developed Countries.

70. The Russian Federation was making its contribution to implementing the Almaty Programme of Action. It had reached agreement with Mongolia and China on a tripartite framework agreement on transit transport, which would form the basis for a strong subregional regulatory system. The development of regional economic integration would have a positive impact on the introduction of effective transit arrangements and agreements on subregional and bilateral cooperation on transit transport would play an important role.

71. **Ms. Houngbedji** (Benin) said that Benin had been trying since 2001, by its economic, social and governance efforts, to honour the commitments undertaken at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. The Government's objective was to achieve improved economic performance and accelerated growth, to create an investment-friendly environment, to adapt its financial system to the needs of the economic actors and to improve management of public finances and human

resources: all steps that would permit Benin to create favourable conditions for achievement of the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action.

72. In Benin, agriculture was the sector that could make the greatest contribution to poverty reduction through job creation but it was also the sector with the lowest paying jobs. To correct that situation, the Government was setting up a programme of agricultural modernization in order to improve returns and productivity, through enhanced agricultural research and technical facilities. The objective was to create conditions favourable to the export of agricultural products and to establish incentives for investment in the agricultural sector, notably in order to develop processing capacity. Thus, the reforms that could lead to development were in place in Benin; it needed to be supported in its efforts by the international community, which should work in particular on the elimination of trade barriers.

73. In West and Central Africa, some 20 million people, mostly small-scale subsistence farmers, lived off cotton growing. Studies showed that sub-Saharan cotton producers had lost $450 million since 2004, becoming poorer despite having increased production. Yet elimination of American subsidies to the cotton industry would result in an increase of 6 to 14 per cent in the price of cotton, translating into an increase of 2.3 to 5.7 per cent in households' purchasing power in the African cotton-producing countries. Since 2003, Benin had unceasingly been seeking appropriate measures to correct that injustice. Despite its submission, together with Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali, of the sectoral initiative in favour of cotton, there was a situation of total blockage, in which the issue of reductions in domestic subsidies was linked to the success of the entire Doha Round. In those conditions, there was scant hope that the least developed countries could benefit from globalization and achieve the objectives defined by the Brussels Programme of Action.

74. Calls for good governance at the national level were certainly praiseworthy, but there was a parallel need for democracy in the international institutions. For example, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund should formally recognize the criteria designating the least developed countries and grant them additional resources in line with their needs.

75. The Office of the High Representative should ensure the effective mobilization of the United Nations bodies for the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action. It should also reinforce its efforts to facilitate the effective participation of the least developed countries in the appropriate multilateral bodies and in particular in the annual review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action in the Economic and Social Council.

76. **Mr. Ngor** (Sudan) said that the Cotonou Strategy was a useful tool for helping to assess what had been achieved and what yet remained to be done, by both sides of the partnership, in order to fulfil the seven commitments in the Brussels Programme of Action.

77. Most least developed countries had demonstrated a sincere willingness, by putting in place national development strategies, improving governance and so on, but those undertakings had not been sufficient to bring about the socio-economic structural transformation that was required in order substantially to reduce poverty levels. Positive development had often been thwarted by structural impediments beyond the countries' control, such as lack of resources and financial flows, the adverse impact of climate change, or unfair international terms of trade.

78. In its 2007 Least Developed Countries Report, UNCTAD had stated that the recent growth spurt which some least developed countries had experienced was very fragile, as it depended on high commodity prices and could easily be followed by a collapse. Globalization had yet to become a fair, equitable and inclusive force. Rather, it had caused disparities between and within countries, some of which had been left on the sidelines of the globalization process.

79. It was a matter for concern that, despite recent pledges, donors were failing to meet the target of official development assistance equivalent to 0.20 per cent of GNI. Although debt relief had been extended to several least developed countries, many with significant debt burdens remained outside the Highly Indebted Poor Countries and Multilateral Debt Relief initiatives, and in many cases the conditionalities attached to those initiatives were difficult to meet. Flexibility must be granted to the least developed countries in that regard.

80. Infrastructure inadequacy had plagued the least developed countries for a long time, and removal of

that obstacle, which constituted one of the seven commitments of the Brussels Programme of Action, should be one area on which the development partners should focus. A related crucial area was trade. Concluding the Doha Round was imperative if the least developed countries were to benefit from its development dimension. The Sudan had shown strong political commitment to the Brussels Programme of Action, demonstrated by the establishment of a High-Level Commission, which had undertaken studies of the seven commitments of the Brussels Programme of Action and had issued periodic reports on progress.

81. In May 2007, the Sudan had updated its country report, indicating the progress made in the areas of people-centred approach to development, governance institutions, trade-related activities and institutional development, but a recurrent obstacle had been the lack of resources to fund the different activities, especially given the country's huge reconstruction burden. The Sudan had been actively engaged in improving the socio-economic condition of the population to help sustain peace. Consequently, wealth-sharing arrangements were essential components of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the Darfur Peace Agreement and the East Sudan Peace Agreement. However the country's huge external debt, exceeding $27 billion, remained one of the major impediments to its development efforts. It therefore called for the cancellation of its external debt, which would release the necessary funds to allow it to fund its reconstruction efforts. It also called on donors to fulfil their pledges made at the Oslo Donors' Conference of 2005.

82. **Mr. Ishize** (Japan) noted that least developed countries were being held back by limited productive capacity. In Africa, home to 34 of the world's 50 least developed countries, Japan had been working with the secretariat of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to support infrastructure development in least developed countries in accordance with the principle of national ownership and leadership. Japan continued to provide Aid for Trade, through its Development Initiative for Trade, to help the least developed countries boost exports and improve competitiveness. Its support also took the form of technology transfer through South-South cooperation and other technical cooperation projects aimed at diversifying exports. In April 2007, Japan had significantly enhanced duty-free and quota-free market access to the least developed countries, going beyond the target stated in the Hong Kong WTO Ministerial Declaration. Japan was also steadily moving towards its goal of doubling official development assistance to Africa by the end of 2007, and remained committed to implementing the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

83. The development of least developed countries could not be discussed without mentioning peacebuilding. Most least developed countries had experienced violent conflict in the past 15 years. The need for a coordinated approach to breaking the vicious circle of poverty and conflict had led to the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission. Japan, which was chairing the Commission, would work in close cooperation with all stakeholders to promote integrated peacebuilding strategies that addressed the needs of post-conflict countries and laid the foundations for sustainable development.

84. Japan reaffirmed the importance of implementing the Almaty Programme of Action. The international community needed to reinforce its support for landlocked developing countries, as it had agreed to do at the thematic meetings held in Burkina Faso and Mongolia earlier in the year. The Government of Japan, for its part, had been providing a wide range of support for infrastructure development and capacity-building.

85. *Ms. Lintonen (Finland) resumed the Chair.*

86. **Mr. Sea** (Cambodia) observed that the least developed countries, despite general progress, were having difficulty meeting the Millennium Development Goals. More financial aid, reduced debt service and increased current account inflows were essential if their growth was to be achieved. The developed countries must fulfil their commitment to allocate 0.2 per cent of their GDP in ODA, which could be enhanced by genuine partnership between donors and recipients. In particular, aid for trade initiatives should be increased at the earliest opportunity.

87. Since 2000, his country had achieved peace and political stability through various reforms and development strategies which had provided impetus for rapid economic development, and had attained an annual average growth rate of 11.4 per cent during the period 2004-2006. On the basis of that performance, it had been invited to make a presentation on national implementation of the Millennium Development Goals at a recent meeting of the Economic and Social

Council. Cambodia could achieve the Goals provided that its development partners and the global community took bold initiatives to support its national strategies and create win-win partnerships. In view of the least developed countries' need to capitalize on market access opportunities, his delegation trusted that the current Doha Round would produce a package providing duty-free and quota-free access for all products from those countries.

88. **Ms. Juul** (Norway) said that although the latest figures had shown that a slight decline in extreme poverty in the previous five years, there had also been a small increase in sub-Saharan Africa, demonstrating the need for additional efforts if the least developed countries, especially in Africa, were to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Sound national policies and good governance were of the essence, as were better anti-corruption policies. It was encouraging that more were pledging adherence to the principles of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the Kimberley Process, but greater progress was needed for broader elimination of corruption and economic fraud.

89. She welcomed the rise in investment rates in many least developed countries. However, while there was strong optimism in the private sector and among officials in countries such as the United Republic of Tanzania and Ethiopia, investment rates remained low and the business climate unfavourable in many of them. Despite progress in many areas, general accountability and Government effectiveness had weakened and infrastructure development had been slow, seriously hampering private sector development.

90. Her country was ready to put its expertise at the disposal of the least developed countries to reduce the obstacles, create a climate for growth and build on human and institutional capacities. She commended the more widespread adherence to the developed countries' commitment to devote 0.7 per cent of GDP to ODA. However, more donors must join in to make the scaling-up initiative a success. Norway's 2008 development budget earmarked 0.98 per cent of GDP and aimed to allocate at least 1 per cent eventually. It strongly supported targeted debt relief, the HIPC Initiative, the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative and measures to ensure that additional relief complemented, rather than replaced, development assistance.

91. Developing countries needed more investment and trade for underpinning social development, but unfortunately their share of global FDI had fallen. While the least developed countries in Africa had fared better than the developing countries owing to a surge in natural resources exploration, more needed to be done to encourage investment in their other sectors. Least developed countries needed improved market access and further integration into the international trading system. In that connection, her delegation urged other developed countries to emulate Norway by granting all least developed countries' exports duty-free and quota-free access, although advanced developing countries also had a part to play.

92. Also crucial was aid for trade, to which end her country was formalizing a plan of action focusing on Africa and least developed countries, which concentrated on good governance and the fight against corruption; women and trade; and regional trade. It would be a major supporter of the newly enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries, which would become a pillar of the Government's plan of action. It was willing to make the Doha Round a "round for free" for the poorest countries and, since the link between trade and development was not automatic, developing countries must receive assistance in order to overcome supply-side constraints on their participation in international markets. What was needed for success was the will of recipients and development partners alike to translate plans into promises.

93. **Mr. Krishnaswamy** (India) said that the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action required cooperation among landlocked developing countries, transit developing countries and their developed country partners. The two thematic preparatory meetings for the midterm review had underlined the importance of further financial resources and technical support for capacity-building in physical infrastructure. Transit developing countries faced many challenges in providing transit transport facilities to landlocked countries, and India had signed special bilateral cooperation agreements with its two landlocked neighbours for easy transport of their goods through the country and had given economic and technical support, as well as promoting regional transport and trade connectivity.

94. Regarding the Brussels Programme of Action, he urged a shift from the offer of palliatives to a direct

attack on the root causes of underdevelopment and to the provision of additional financing, improved market access, affordable technology transfer and the building of institutions and capacity. He welcomed the fact that some least developed countries had graduated, or were graduating, from that category, but urged the international community to help them in the post-graduation process so that they could sustain their achievements. In that connection, he also supported the appeal for a reconsideration of the graduation criteria.

95. Disappointingly, many developed countries had been tardy in the fulfilment of their ODA commitments and there had sometimes even been a drop in such assistance; he therefore advocated prompted fulfilment of those commitments. With reference to trade, developed countries must improve market access for the least developed countries. His delegation attached importance to the ongoing Doha Round and the negotiations for the Global System of Trade Preferences, in which context imports from least developed countries to India would enjoy a zero tariff regime by the end of 2007.

96. Greater collective efforts were needed, including through an international debt commission overseen by the United Nations, to address the least developed countries' debt problem. His country had written off the debt of seven highly indebted poor countries and, in the context of South-South cooperation, placed special emphasis on assistance to least developed countries in general and those in its extended neighbourhood in particular.

97. **Mr. Aspelund** (Iceland) said that his country set great store by its ODA commitment to the least developed countries, many of which still fell short of the target of 0.7 per cent annual growth and faced the serious problem of extreme poverty, which required a substantial international effort. In that context, he welcomed the new advocacy strategy described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/322), which would raise awareness of the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action and facilitate its timely implementation. Iceland was providing financial support to the HIPC Initiative, as well as supporting the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative. The bulk of its ODA was devoted to least developed countries, while the core of its multilateral development activities had been support for the Icelandic International Development Agency.

98. Iceland had increased its support for the World Food Programme and its fish was a primary source of protein for many in the least developed countries. Its bilateral fisheries projects also improved food security and reduced malnutrition. Education at all levels was a core aspect of the Government's development cooperation and his country was host to the United Nations University Geothermal and Fisheries Training Programmes. Because of the link between poverty and illiteracy, basic training and education and adult literacy programmes accounted for a significant share of its development cooperation. Three of the eight Millennium Development Goals focused on health and in that connection his country provided assistance to the health sector in Malawi and Mozambique. It was also involved in gender-specific projects in least developed countries through bilateral programmes and support for UNFPA and UNIFEM, while it addressed energy for development at the multilateral level.

99. His country was committed to implementing the Almaty Programme of Action and welcomed the work being done on adequate preparation of its 2008 midterm review. Aid for Trade was an important initiative that could reduce the adverse effects of the geography of landlocked countries and should be integrated into a broader development policy. At the same time, the breakdown of the Doha Round could have serious consequences. The poorest in the developing countries were the hardest hit by and least responsible for climate change, a major concern that required attention to the special needs of the most vulnerable.

100. **Mr. Penjo** (Bhutan) said that the item was of particular importance to Bhutan, itself a landlocked country. At the midpoint to the deadline for attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, the picture was mixed at best, while the midterm review of the Brussels Programme of Action had found that many least developed countries were unlikely to achieve its objectives and, consequently, the Millennium Development Goals. He urged political leaders and stakeholders fully to meet their international commitments, including those undertaken in the context of the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the 2005 World Summit Outcome. Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action required the active cooperation of landlocked countries, transit developing countries and the developed countries. Adequate resources from the

regular budget as well as extrabudgetary sources must be mobilized to ensure the success of its midterm review.

101. Although Bhutan, with the support of its development partners, especially neighbouring India, had made enormous socio-economic progress since the early 1960s, its efforts required the support of the international community, especially as it embarked on the transition to democracy. The first parliamentary elections would be held early in 2008, at which time it would adopt a new democratic constitution. But for democracy to take root there must be progress in the socio-economic field. In conclusion, he thanked the bilateral and multilateral donors for their steadfast support.

102. **Mr. Naeemi** (Afghanistan) said that landlocked developing countries' lack of territorial access to the sea, their remoteness from world markets and their dependence on neighbouring countries' transit services, not to mention protracted customs and administrative delays and cumbersome procedures, added to their high trade transaction costs and significantly hampered their competitiveness. Their priorities, therefore, were efficient transit transport systems, infrastructure development, maintenance of international trade, and trade facilitation. Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action had been slow, but its midterm review would afford landlocked and transit developing countries the opportunity fully to assess progress and the reasons for the tardiness.

103. In addition to the well-known difficulties facing all landlocked developing countries, Afghanistan, as a post-conflict country, also needed to overcome special infrastructure problems, given the devastation of its human resources, nascent national institutions and physical infrastructure during three decades of violence, which had also left millions of landmines and unexploded ordnance behind, further increasing the costs of socio-economic development and reconstruction.

104. Special assistance was also needed for countries emerging from conflict to develop their trade capacity. Road building was a top priority for his country, which in partnership with the international community had almost completed a road network connecting Kabul to major Afghan provinces and neighbouring countries. Once fully operational it could provide landlocked Central Asian countries with access to seaports in Pakistan and Iran within 32 hours. With relative peace and stability, his country was regaining its status as a land bridge between Asia and the Middle East.

105. All investment-related legislation, regulations and procedures were being simplified and harmonized for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. However, his country needed additional resources and the cooperation of its neighbours in order to surmount the unique challenges and provide economic opportunities for the inhabitants. In that connection, the role of the private sector was pivotal. Afghanistan was strengthening private and public partnerships in order to facilitate and monitor transit and transport and to improve facilities and strengthen the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. In addition to its bilateral agreements with a number of neighbours and other Central Asian countries, his country had convened the Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation in Kabul in 2005 and had very recently hosted the meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Council of Ministers.

106. Afghanistan was in the process of acceding to WTO and was a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Central Asia Regional Cooperation and ECO. Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the Almaty Programme of Action required sustainable assistance from developed countries. In pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals, his country had launched the Afghanistan Compact and incorporated the goals set forth in the Almaty Plan of Action into the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

107. Afghanistan held great promise for the peace, security, and prosperity of the region and had made great strides over the previous five years in rebuilding its infrastructure and creating national institutions. The authorities were determined to make the country a model of cooperation both in the fight against terror and in efforts to implement the Almaty Programme of Action.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.